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Tinguely quotes (CT notes)

"I found in New York an atmosphere that was very favorable to my own work. The spirit of Rauschenberg, John Chamberlain, Jasper Johns, John Cage and others like that was something new for me."

"Abstract art has become very conformist, but never popular. In my case, I can say that I make popular art."

"It was extremely important for me to come (to New York) and see what Rauschenberg and Stankiewicz were doing. It was a liberating experience. There's a real tension in the air, and uneasiness (inquiétude) that makes you feel as though you're living on the edge of a precipice. It makes Paris and Milan seem provincial. There is of course the danger of a too-ready acceptance in New York, the chic of being avant-garde; but I'd rather run that risk than live in neglect in France."

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Billy Klüver - Jan. 18, 1961 — HOMAGE etc

"How can a work of art be functional?" he asked, smiling. "Everybody missed the point about Jean's self-destroying machine. The very fact that it did not destroy itself, that things went wrong, was what delighted him so. There was one part that was supposed to go off by itself and fall into the pond at the garden, to drown itself. We tested it the night before, and it didn't work. The motor was too small. Jean could have replaced the motor in two minutes, but he didn't want to. The machine was full of motors that were too big for what they were doing, andsome that were too small, and that was how it was. The point is, you see, he isn't interested in fixing something so that it works -- he just keeps adding new things, new gadgets...

"My wife really got him interested in using junk. Oh, of course he was influenced by Stankiewicz, but it was my wife who suggested that we go to the Newark dump -- it's a fantastic place, Jean fell in love with it and wanted to live there. He had an idea that he could use the bums living in shacks to help him build his constructions, and they wouldn't know they were making a work of art. Out of the chaos of the dump, and back to chaos again, the complete cycle -- that was what he wanted to show.

"All good machines destroy themselves. Look at Cape Canaveral. In the U.S., the machine doesn't have to work. This isn't so in Russia, of course. But here -- that's why it was called Homage a New York.

Rockefeller and other officials waiting for an hour in the slush to see a machine whose sole function was to destroy itself. No other function.

"I didn't know how to make smoke. I tried everything, finally I went to a chemist and he showed me. Well, it was beautiful. White, thick smoke covered everything. And the fan that was supposed to blow the paper for the abstract painting blew it back into the cafe where all those ladies were sitting, and blotted out the Life photographer.

"When Jean saw that roller with the paper winding up the wrong way he grabbed my arm, laughing like crazy. 'Look at that!' he said. He was delighted. That was his metamatic number 21, and it was the last -- it finished them for him. (Connie Lambert, of the Seagram family, and Nelson Rockefeller both bought metamatics).

~~"After the Museum show Jean just poured out ideas after ideas. It was fantastic.~~ 'I must have smells,' he told me, 'prostitute smells, brothel smells, everything.' It's very difficult to get smells, I had found a skunk smell, and five or six different stinks, and put them in bottles on the machine in the garden, but something went wrong and the bottles didn't break. But then later when the people came down to take away souvenirs they managed to break them all and the stink was tremendous, it covered everything for a while.

"I got the bicycle wheels from a place in Plainfield. I managed to get about 50, the man was selling out, and put them in the back of my car and drove to the Museum about ten o'clock at night. When Jean saw them he was like a child -- he had expected maybe five or six. His ideas took shape from them. That's how it works, you see -- he creates with what comes to hand, the material shapes the creation.

"The Museum show was like a great liberation for Jean. He ~~was full of~~ just poured out ideas afterwards -- of course he's always full of ideas and he can do almost anything.

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He talked of making something with one black and one white machine. He talked of a machine that would destroy museums, constantly knocking down a wall or tearing up grass. He talked of another that would go along the street painting the pavement, and it would be followed by another machine that would wash it up -- he thought that would be fine for the Los Angeles Freeway. I would love to see him get Yankee Stadium or Madison Square Garden for a night...

(Note: To Tinguely, Kluver was a "friendly saboteur." T. was using the element of chance as a part of the construction; Billy, as engineer, was seeking to overcome the element of chance, Instead, Billy himself became "l'element inconnu.")

"Tinguely is very intellectual, but this has absolutely nothing to do with his work. He never does anything until two days before the show. I was like his marionette, literally. When I suggested an idea he was always enthusiastic, he'd say 'yes, yes," and then do just the opposite. [illegible] He made a sort of carriage for the piano in Homage, and when I looked at it I said, 'why, Jean, that's perfect, that's just how an engineer would have designed it.' He was furious. Right away he began nailing slats and planks onto the basic structure."

"Jean is an intuitive engineer, you see. He has absorbed engineering into him so he doesn't even have to think about it.

No idea behing Tinguely's work. "He is just making things. And what he tells you doesn't necessarily mean anything. He says anything that comes into his head."

"Jean made a portrait of me once. There was a roller skate that went back and forth on a track, an upright piece, a part of a radio. It was perfect. I couldn't get over it for days -- he really had me."

"In Paris once, Tinguely was asked by the manager of the Galleries Lafayette if he would make a machine for one of their windows. Jean thought for just 20 seconds and said yes. His idea was to have, in every window of the store, a machine destroying one of their products. One machine would be chewing up plates, another tearing up rugs or dresses, etc. The slogan would be 'Come and Buy Before Jean Tinguely Destroys Everything.'" (Offer not accepted; but Yoshiaki Tono thinks he can get a Tokyo store to accept, when Jean goes to Japan).

Billy finds Len Lye "beautiful but cold. The motor is always concealed, unlike Tinguely's. But both Tinguely and Lye have absorbed the idea of the machine - you don't think of motors any more when you see their work. Len is of another gale from Jean - he's finding beauty in the materials, he's actually more of a classical sculptor."

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Kluver Bio: Studied at Institute of Technology in Stockholm, apparently mixed with artists from childhood. After graduation spent a year in Paris working in TV lab, and met Tinguely there. ~~[illegible]~~ Came to U.S. in 1954 and took PhD at Univ of California, where he was an assistant professor. Took position with Bell Labs in 1958, and now lived in Murray Hill, NJ (near Summit) His work involves research in electron beams and micro-wave tubes, whatever that is. He doesn't like to talk about himself. A shy, keen-witted, probably brilliant man with a subtle and penetrating intelligence. Smiles and laughs easily, has great warmth and response, but essentially quite modest.

He began getting together artists to contribute to the Stockholm show only two months ago, calling on people he knew mostly and calling up others. "Some artists offered to give us transient motion, such as a machine that goes away when it is looked at, or a machine that bites the spectator when he approaches. But most of them were surprisingly cooperative and interested."

"Stankiewicz first said 'I can't do it,' when I called him. So immediately I went to see him. I thought maybe this was by big chance to get one thing that doesn't move. But when we met he already had an idea. If I could, I would contribute a pyramid -- just something solid and unmoving."

25 Americans are contributing, of whom five are writing articles and 20 are making things. "It just seems as though a lot of people are getting a lot of ideas around the same time."

Allen Kaprow is sending merely instructions for a room, to be filled with cardboard boxes that people can then change around at will -- audience participatipn.

"The clash between art and the new technologies -- this is what it's all about really. Take chemistry -- fantastic possibilities for art there. Art is in transition... Who can really control a 7090 computer? It's impossible. The scientist can only make other things, more things. The position of the artist is very much like that of the scientist today. He's accepted, he has fantastic freedom in the U.S., but the people don't really know what he's doing or why. This is the very beauty of America...

[illegible] would finally collapse as dozens of saws attacked the steel construction. The noise would be terrific.

The beginning was slow. Jean bought old motors in the bizarre Canal street shops. A weather balloon and smoke signals (that did not work) were found in a surplus store. He collected steel tubing for the structure and tools to work with. Pulleys were expensive. He wanted old bicycle wheels from junkyards. But no junkyard deals in such trivialities in the U. S. I stumbled on to a dealer in Plainfield who was clearing out his basement and carried away 35 old rusty wheels. Jean was excited like a child when we brought the wheels through the empty Museum that evening. The dome was unheated and the temperature was below freezing, but things began to move. "I want more wheels.", he said.

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Billy has an idea for US artists to stage a great exhibition during the 1964 World's Fair, taking space in a New Jersey lot or somewhere -- could show anything; the total freedom of art here. Despite organization, mechanization of life we are still free to do whatever we like, we are not servants of machines. We are even free to make anti-art.

"But anti-art, if it is really anti, is therefore art."

"The interesting thing about this (Stockholm) exhibition is that there has been no selection. We just asked people to do things, and here they are."

"People are more and more interested in using the tools of engineering and technology to produce the effect of motion. It's more the idea of motion than art, really. To me, very few of them succeed. Tinguely is certainly the most important. He is really producing sculpture -- you don't see the gadgetry any more. Len Lye is at another pole -- he's finding beauty in the materials. He's actually more of a classical sculptor."

"The kinetic artists have brought the spectator into the work of art, given him something to do. They've got him directly involved for a change."

"You must remember, I don't know anything about art. I just live it."

Why Sweden? "In Sweden everything is good design and good taste -- furniture, houses, everything. It's the national disease. You long to see something ugly."

was to be sawed in half. Parts of the machine would tip over, others would finally collapse as dozens of saws attacked the steel construction. The noise would be terrific.

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Calvin Tomkins

The Garden Party
by
J. W. Kluver

Jean Tinguely's destructive construction No. 1 was built in the Buckminster Fuller dome at the Museum of Modern Art over a period of three weeks. When, on March 17th, 1960, his machine was put into action the spectacle was one of beautiful humor, poetry and confusion. Jean's machine performed for half an hour and exists no more.

When Jean first told me about his idea for a self-destructive machine, he wanted a large assembly hall on Manhattan. The machine would do all kinds of wild things and finally destroy itself. A chicken net would save the audience from a similar fate. But the Museum of Modern Art came into the picture and offered Jean the sculpture garden as the site and the dome to work in.

The first drawings of the machine show little resemblance with the final result. A metamatic painting machine was there. It would create a continuously changing painting that would disappear as the paper was rolled up again into a tight roll. A text of dirty words would unfold. A Virgin Mary was to be sawed in half. Parts of the machine would tip over, others would finally collapse as dozens of saws attacked the steel construction. The noise would be terrific.

The beginning was slow. Jean bought old motors in the bizarre Canal street shops. A weather balloon and smoke signals (that did not work) were found in a surplus store. He collected steel tubing for the structure and tools to work with. Pulleys were expensive. He wanted old bicycle wheels from junkyards. But no junkyard deals in such trivialities in the U. S. I stumbled on to a dealer in Plainfield who was clearing out his basement and carried away 35 old rusty wheels. Jean was excited like a child when we brought the wheels through the empty Museum that evening. The dome was unheated and the temperature was below freezing, but things began to move. "I want more wheels.", he said.

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The next day my wife and I raided the Summit dump. This was a gold mine. We loaded the car and parked it behind the fence on 54th Street. A childs pot and bassinet, the drum from a washing machine and 25 more baby carriage and bicycle wheels were thrown over the fence. The Saturday afternoon passers-by came up with the inevitable question: "What's going on here?" On the other side of the fence Jean was laughing.

The following day the first structure was almost finished. It contained a large metamatic with the pot, the bassinet and the drum as percussion elements. A nut was beating on the pot, a clamp was jumping up and down in the bassinet and a fan motor was attacking the drum. The paper would unfold from an horizontal roll at the top and be guided down on sheet metal trough. Here it would be painted on by an elaborate arm that Jean later worked on for 2 days until it was perfect. At the bottom of the structure the continuously moving paper would be blown towards the audience by a fan. The machine was taking form.

Jean and I made another trip to the dump. This time it was the Newark city dump which is as much a reflection of the general neighborhood as is the Summit dump. This large dump was Jean's world. He kept finding the oddest objects and formations. Spilled out paint would make a painting to be exhibited in some fashionable gallery. Someone had left a complete bedroom set. If he could find a willing girl (which he admitted was difficult) this would be a place where he would like to live. "I could, you know", he said. He would spend his days in the dump as a completely free man. Out of the debris he would build large, involved constructions. Slowly he would convince the bums, living in small shacks on the dump, that what he was making was important. Eventually they would join him and help him build. Of course, art was never to be mentioned, and his contructions would never be

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anything else but part of the dump. It is against the background of the anarchy and chaos of the Newark City dump that I see the growth of his machine.

The bums did indeed help us and we walked away with a cable drum, American flags, a rusty oil can and more baby carriage wheels, of which there for some reason were plenty. Jean kept saying constantly: "We can put anything into the machine." In the final analysis this was of course not true. As we were going back to the Museum over the Jersey flats with our load, Jean behaved like a tourist seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time. To him the landscape was extremely beautiful.

Jean was now going at a fantastic rate. But the dome was cold and he became ill with fever. This did not stop him however, and he called anxiously for the inside of an old piano and a radio. I was lucky. A piano dealer in the neighborhood of the museum had an old piano. "Ten dollars if you come and get it." For two dollars Jean bought an old addressograph machine from the Museum. Now he had what he wanted.

(2)

On the piano he mounted about ten arms made up of old bicycle parts. These arms hit the keys of the piano as the players of a player piano. Attached to the piano was another metamatic. A smaller one with a sponge on the painting arm. The paper came down and was again rolled into a tight roll. "L'art ephemère." There were two texts that would roll by like the news letters on Times Square. One was vertical and one was horizontal. "Je fais l'angle droit, tu sais", he boasted. Rising above the structure was a 25 foot high steel tube that would support the weather ballon at the top. An old wooden radio was attached to the side of the piano and was sawed in half by a large handsaw. The whole

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section with the piano and the second metamatic had dozens of wheels in it for the various operations.

The addressograph machine was transformed into a percussion machine with cans and a big bell. It made a fantastic noise. As the big motor of the machine worked, a lever stuck under the machine would be pulled in and the machine would fall over. This system was never tried out.

During the last days he made two small carriages powered by their own motors. One had a giant motor and a two-foot klaxon sitting on two baby carriage wheels and a small pulley. This was to be placed under the piano and would at a certain moment escape dragging odd objects behind it. The second moving contraption was a very odd thing. Jean's idea was that it would move to the side and fall into the pond of the garden. It would commit suicide. The carriage was made up from a cable drum, more wheels and an oil can. Sticking above it was a rod to which a corner of an American flag was attached. Two nights before the evening, we tried it out in the museum. It was a strange sight to see this wonderful creation move labouriously in the empty Museum halls. As it moved, an arm was tapping a march rythm on the empty can and the red and white piece of the flag was waving back and forth furiously. Stunned spectators looked through the window on 53rd street at the weird and beautiful spectacle.

The destruction seemed less and less an element of the machine. The saws were replaced by joints that would break as the metal out of which they were made was melted by the heat from overheated resistances. Thus the original steeltubing was sawed through and these joints were attached to support the structure. Jean seemed happy not to have to worry about the saws, but the joints never became quite a real part of his structure. As the first metamatic collapsed, it would fall backwards. The piano, placed on a frame two feet above ground, would itself fall backwards into the fallen

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metamatic. The second metamatic and the support for the balloon would be dragged along in the fall of the piano. Behind the piano Jean mounted a carbondioxide fire extinguisher, concealed by boards of wood. As a lever was pulled, the extinguisher would empty itself with a big swoosh. At the same time the bell on the addressograph would ring.

Nothing was to be touched during the operation of the machine. The various functions and elements were to be started by preset time delay relays. Everything was elaborately mechanically and electrically wired. Even a flame, which would burn on the piano, was to be lighted electrically. All over the structure were smoke flashes and yellow smoke signals which would be started without direct interference. This combination of electrical and mechanical control gave Jean a great freedom to develop his machine.

An involved gear system would turn on the piano slowly. After a few minutes a bucket of gasoline would be turned over the flame, a burning candle, so that the piano would catch fire. Another mechanical arrangement turned three beer cans filled with paint on the paper rolling down towards the audience in the first metamatic. On the very top of the first structure was a trough in which gallon sized bottles would slide down as they were pushed by a lever. When they crashed to the ground nauseating smells would spread. A childs cart would be pushed back and forth in front of the structure. There must have been of the order of a hundred different operations in the machine.

Not until the last days did Jean decide to paint his machine all white. He seemed fascinated with this color but was a little worried that the machine would look too beautiful. The only counterpoint seemed to be the balloon that would explode and hang disgustingly over the piano. The two texts were composed the night before the event on the

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first floor of the ~~m~~useum. The nightwatchmen, late museum employee~~s~~ - everybody helped.

On the day of destruction the temperature rose above freezing for the first time. It was slushy and the St. Patrick's Day parade was braving the rain on Fifth Avenue. When I arrived in the morning the museum workmen, usually accustomed to hanging delicate paintings, were struggling to get the machine out of the dome and down to the sculpture garden. It was slippery and things broke. The addressograph was damaged and Jean became tense. At one moment I thought he was going to quit it all. But nothing could break his resources of energy and towards the afternoon his excitement transmitted to everyone. The workmen were now breaking their backs to get things in order. The museum had given him carte blanche and everything Jean wanted he got. The rain stopped.

Robert Rauschenberg who had promised a mascot for the machine, showed up with an object called a money-thrower. When some powder in an open box was lighted, the thrust would release two springs in which he had stuck a dozen silver dollars. Rauschenberg patiently waited for hours to have his money-thrower connected.

Earlier in the morning I had finally got hold of various stinking liquids which I put in the bottles. Jean had already rejected the use of N butyl mercaptan or the stink of the skunk, inspite of the fact that he had demanded the strongest stinks I could find. I had also found out how to make a thick white smoke. Since several other methods had failed for us, I did not emphasize to Jean what I had found, but simply asked him if I could put it in the bassinet. He said O.K.

The klaxon did not work. Robert Breer went for a wild last minute chase for a 6 volt klaxon and found one that he actually tore off an old car. No new one would do. By

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then he was so wet and dirty that no taxi would take him back to the museum.

The public arrived, but nobody noticed it. Jean was fixing the metamatics, putting on the smoke flashes and directing everybody else. Not until 6 o'clock did I get a powerline to the machine. All the circuits were connected. By accident Robert Breer turned on the fire extinguisher in the piano. The secret had been revealed, but nobody understood what had happened. I discovered that one leg on the first structure was not sawed through. It was a real irony that the last thing we did was to saw this leg off. If it had been left the structure would supposedly not have collapsed and fallen over.

At 7:30 I was finished. On va? On va, said Jean. He looked as calm as if he was about to take the bus. Not once did we go over and check everything. The construction and the beginning of the destruction were indistinguishable. Bob Breer put the titaniumtetracloride in the bassinet, a friend, who had helped me with the circuits, put in the plug and I set the relays. The machine was off. It was launched as it was constructed. Jean was in complete charge of his work.

The piano was to begin playing slowly as ~~the flame on the keyboard was lighted~~. But the variac had broken in the transport, so the motor had to be started directly at full speed. The effect was that the driving sling jumped the wheel on the piano as the motor started. I was cold. No piano! Nervously I tried to put on the sling. "Laisse - moi faire, Billy" I heard Jean's voice say calmly. A fuze had blown. It was fixed. The paino was again working, but only three notes were playing. Three sad notes. Some slings had been lost. I saw nobody but the machine. The audience was invisible.

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After three minutes the first metamatic was on. But Jean had reversed the sling so the paper was rolling up instead of down. It was a bizarre effect. Earlier he had with great care put the paper in order and fixed the arm. The audience must have expected a lot from this machine. To make the situation more incredible, the motor driving the arm had not been reconnected. Thus even if Jean had put the sling on correctly, the metamatic would not have worked and the empty paper would have rolled down the trough. Jean was laughing like he always did when something exciting happened. The metamatic No, 21 gave a three foot long painting as the beer cans emptied on the paper rolling in the wrong direction. And the arm he had worked on to perfection did not function. But the fan at the bottom of the structure was not without use. The smoke was coming out thick and white from the bassinet and the fan blew it towards the audience. Ladies with mink-coats, who were sitting in the cafeteria could not see because of the smoke. The percussions elements were working fine.

In the sixth minute the radio went on. Nobody could hear it from the noise. The gasoline bucket was turned over the flame and the piano started burning. Rauschenberg's money-thrower went off in a big flash. The silver dollars were never seen again. The fan motor started to beat on the drum from the washing machine. But the bottles did not fall. Jean had put in a too weak string. Why? After all our haggle over the stinks. But the only thing that annoyed Jean was that the balloon did not burst. The compressed air bottle was empty. The little two-wheel cart in front of the metamatic started to move back and forth.

In the tenth minute the second metamatic started and worked beautifully. It gave a black painting streak with the sponge on the arm. The horizontal text went on. Something was wrong with it. It was winding up too slowly. Jean came by: "Do you remember the little ring you picked up and asked what it was for? It was to hold the paper roll up." Meanwhile the vertical text was finished and the paper end was

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flying over the burning piano.

Jean was walking around calmly. He stopped in front of the machine and let the photographers take pictures, posing like an actor. As he was standing there, the text "ying is yang" appeared on the horizontal text roll. On the pictures of him with his self-destroying machine in the background this sentence can be read above his head.

In the eighteenth minute the fire extinguisher in the piano was supposed to go off. It didn't. The simple reason was that the piano was now burning all the way through and the rubber hose had burnt up and clogged the extinguisher. But the suicide carriage went off some ten feet. The motor was so weak that Jean had to help it along. It would never have made it to the pond anyway and Jean knew this all along. But he never exchanged the weak motor for a stronger one which would have been a simple operation. As a functional object the suicide carriage was supposed to move, as a work of art it wasn't. This was typical for Jean's relation to the motor. On other places in the machine there were big motors that did practically nothing, and in one situation, he used a motor as a counterweight! The motor was for Jean part of the sculpture.

The addressograph machine began to work. The yellow smoke signal was lighted and the arms were banging on the empty oil cans. The bell had never been put into operation. It turned out to be a gong that only strikes once. The whole machine was somewhat sick after the bad handling in the transport and it fell over after only a few minutes.

In the twentieth minute the resistances in the first structure were connected. After a few minutes the metal had melted and the whole structure sagged, but it never collapsed completely and fell over. The reason was that the crossbars that held up the wheels were strong enough to keep the structure together. But the smokeflashes were lighted by the heat from the resistances.

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In the twenty-third minute the little carriage shot out from under the piano with a terrific speed. Its klaxon was working fine and it ended up in a ladder on which the Paris Match correspondent was standing. He turned it around and it continued into the NBC sound equipment. Smoke and flames were coming out of its end.

The fire in the piano was rapidly spreading. At one point Jean had tried to damp it with an extinguisher. Now the flames had eaten their way through the piano and Jean suddenly became afraid that the extinguisher on the back of the piano might explode from the heat. He told me to get the fireman to put out the fire.

The fireman had been there all afternoon. ~~He had desperately been walking around trying to get some information on what was going to happen. He came up to me several times: "Do you have a permit?" he asked. Nobody knew anything.~~ When the fire on the piano started I was standing next to him. ~~He did not react,~~ and seemed to enjoy the spectacle. ~~He later~~ called up the fire department, ~~but~~ it was evidently decided that the fire in the piano was not a fire. ~~Jean called him a "Theoriticien de feu".~~

When I realized what Jean was saying, I ~~tried to~~ explained the situation to the fireman. ~~He did not understand me when I talked about an extinguisher in the piano.~~ The first fire extinguisher from the Museum arrived. ~~It was empty. So was the second one.~~ The fireman was very calm as if nothing was happening. ~~After three minutes, the longest in my life,~~ they ~~finally~~ began to put out the fire. ~~Even then the fireman was reluctant to do so because of the electrical wiring, which for some reason scared him.~~ At this point both Jean and I were almost desperate, but the audience apparently got the wrong impression of what was happening. They thought the fireman was the one who wanted to put out the fire and

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that we were trying to prevent him. They almost lynched the poor man who brought the extinguisher. A giant misunderstanding had developed where only the fireman seemed to be untouched by the confusion. He told me later that, of course, fire extinguishers are not made so that they blow up from heat. There had been no danger whatsoever. The fireman liked the show, he said.

The fire was damped and Bob Breer knocked courageously the supporting pieces of wood from under piano. Jean had not dared to use the automatic system because of the bad effects of the transport. The piano collapsed backwards, but did not fall over.

The fire extinguisher was separated from the piano and the public descended on the remains for souvenirs. They walked away with the radio, the saw, the metamatic drawings and lots of other things. Later the structure was dragged down into a pile of scrap that looked incredible. The bottles broke so that the garden stank for two days. The junk was the next day carried back to the dump. Only a few momenta survived. The battered addressograph machine was given to a photographer from the museum who hauled it away at great expense. It will stand and rust in his garden. The suicide carriage was given to the museum, Bob Breer got a funny wheel construction that had early been put out of operation by the eager audience and the small carriage with the big motor and the klaxon stands under my table. All the rest was memory and pictures.

In the same way as a scientific experiment never can fail, this experiment in art could never fail. The machine was not a functional object and was never treated like one. The spectacle can therefore not be judged in terms of whether this or that thing, did or did not work.

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During the construction of the machine I was constantly amazed at Jean's disregard for the simplest rules of engineering. In one instant he would demand that something should function and in the next he would violate his demand by the most trivial of actions. Jean worked as an artist. He choose his motors and put on his slings as an artist. He was only interested in functional operations that he could understand, so that he could reject or accept them as he pleased. But he was also inspired by the possibilities of engineering and realized that he could use these as long as he was in complete control over what he was doing. As an engineer, working with him, I was part of the machine. This new availability was largely responsible for the size and the complexity of the machine.

Jean's machine was conceived out of "total anarchy and freedom", as he put it. The free and chaotic circumstances under which it was built were a necessity and, in a way, a tremendous luxury. Jean supplied the energy to create the freedom and was the ruler over the chaos. When the energy was released, everything that happened was related to some of Jean's decisions. There can be no distinction made between the "random" elements, the accidents or the controlled parts of the spectacle. It was in its totality created out of freedom and innocence. The bottles that did not fall, the paper roll that rotated the wrong direction, the fireman, and the audience were all part of the same spectacle. There could exist no paradox, no question, no "nonsense", no a priori and no chaos in this spectacle. It was a definite demonstration made with love and humor and not a philosophical problem.

I do not interpret the self-destruction of Jean's machine as an act of protest against the machine or as an expression of nihilism and despair, as some critics have suggested. The self-destruction or self-elimination of the machine is the ideal of good machine behavior. For anyone

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concerned with the relation between the machine and the human beings, this is an obvious truth. This idea has already been expressed by Claude Shannon in the little black box, where, when you pull a switch, a lid opens and a hand emerges that throws the switch in the off position, whereupon the lid closes over the hand again.

Just as we in every moment see and experience a new and changing world, Jean's machine created and destroyed itself as a representation of a moment in our lives. The art of the museum is related to a passed time which we cannot again see and feel. The artist has already left his canvas behind. This art then becomes part of our inherited language, and has thus a different relation to our world than the reality of the immediate now. "L'art ephemère", on the other hand, creates a direct connection between the creative act of the artist and the receptive act of the audience, between the construction and the destruction. It forces us out of the inherited image and into contact with the ever-changing reality. In one of Jeans "manifestos" he says that we shall "be static with the movement". We must be the creative masters of the changing reality, which we are, by the definition of Man. The building parts of Jean's machine came from the chaos of the dump and were returned to the dump.

Jean kept saying that he was constantly thinking about New York as his machine took form. There are probably many connections, the most obvious one being a machine that has rejected itself and become humor and poetry. New York has humor and poetry inspite of the presence of the machine, whereas in a purely technocratic society the machine must always be a functional object. Failures of the machine can therefore never be allowed because the control is the necessary element of the society. It is when the machine must function "à tout prix " that there can be no "Homage to New York."

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Jean Tinguely - 4/1/61 at 214 E. 51st Street

Tinguely was not bonn in Basle, as the catalogue says. He was born in Fribourg, moved to Basle when he was about two or three. His father was a laborer, and Jean's first memories are of conflicts with him. "Il etait dur et moj"(weak) at the same time. Unjust, too. They never got on, and still don't. "I began very early to fend for myself." His parents spoke Dnench, understood no German. Jean "spoke French at home and German in the street, and I stayed in the street as much as possible."

He also stayed away from school, preferring to do and make things with his pals in the street. He went through a period of stealing -- flour sacks, corn sacks, sugar -- when he was 10-12 years; not from hunger, but for the hell of it. Never arrested.

At age 12 he began going into the forest, all by himself. Went all the time, skipped school, weekends -- he was very unhappy at home. His mother kept telling him he was not like other children, etc. He would go to the woods and carve long-faced monsters in the branches of trees, looking down at possible passersby. Also the waterwheels -- see Paris notes.

Napoleon,
This was a great period of reading. History mainly -- Suetonius, Roman history, Alexander the Great, Plutarch, Egyptian Dynasties etc. He read secretly in school and out, had very little interest in any other subject -- although he did continue drawing and "making things." Why history? "I was interested in the actions of great men, simply that. But Iwas not a contemplater -- I wanted to become one.

Jean has a Catholic upbringing, in a Protestant town. This was formative.

In 1938, just before the war, he ran away from home to fight for Albania's independence. He had seen newsreels of the Pope in Rome blessing the Italian fleet, and a few weeks later Mussolini's navy attacked Albania (check this). * April 7, 1939 - invasion - Mussolino hoped to make Albania beachhead for Balkan conquests.
He was "tres commotione." He was also influenced by the life of Byron (whose poems he never read). Taking a few belongings, he struck out for Albania and got as far as the southern border of Switzerland -- walking, hitching rides, going through a long tunnel in the back of a coal wagon. At the border he was stopped by police (much war uneasiness then), and put in jail because he refused to give his name -- he doesn't know why. Then released and sent home.

at age 13, Jean was
After that escapade, sent to work in a department store in Basle. He lasted two weeks, was fired because of some trouble over the time-clock system that he loathed. At home, he was fighting with his father constantly. He got a job in another store where he stayed for two years, doing various menial jobs; and at this point he started going to art school in the evenings.

At 15, he was "drawing like mad" and going more and more to art school. He worked with Julia Ris, who gave them all kinds of material to work with (see Ris letter and Paris notes) -- "tout a fait Schwitters." Jean worked in oil, gouache -- everything. But most influenced by the "merz" techniques of collage.

He never finished anything. He would take a canvas, or a board, and make a collage of anything at hand -- nails, fabric, paper, bits of stray metal. Then he would subject it to all sorts of experiments -- he would cook it in the oven until the metal melted and the materials changed shape; he would take it out and scrub the surface with soap and water; he would dry it in the sun. Then he would paint the surface white and start over. The constant transformations fascinated him.

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"I liked to make something and destroy it two weeks later."

From 18 on he was never at home. He quit work and lived around with various women, most of them older than he and able to support him. There were a few scandals. "It was complete chaos," he recalls. Once he fell from a moving train between Basle and Zurich, dead drunk. He was bruised but not badly hurt.

He started decorating show windows for Basle stores. This was "a means of direct communication with the public." He did only six or seven in all. But one (in furniture sho was motor-powered, and showed a man and his dog (in wire) that moved with such effect that the police had to clear people away from the window outside (this in 1947). This suggested to him the possibilities of using a motor. (see Spoerri card)
At art school, his masters were Klee, Kandinsky, Arp, Malevich, Schwitters, and Calder.

In 1948 he met Eva Appelyi at the school. (see Julia Ris letter.) They lived together for a while, and were married in 1950. One child, a girl, now 11yrs. + living with Jean's parents in Basle, who are trying to adopt her legally and keep her away from J.

Fasthacht -- the annual Lenten carnival was, according to Jean, a pretty tame and stiffy affair. Jean's idea, shared by the raffish crew he associated with at the time, was to ridicule the bourgeois and see how far they could go in provoking them. Once they constructed a float that featured Tinguely and a pal in a bathtub filled with champagne, which they were drinking; elaborate arrangements of flags and junk festooned the float itself (see drawing of J.'s). (see Julia Ris letter)

At a great bazaar in Basle, the bourgeois had chosen as their slogan an inspid phrase from the Swiss 19th century writer and social thinker Pestalozzi. Jean had once found another slogan by this same writer, which no one else knew: "Charity is drowned in the garbage of grace" ("Die Wohltatig keit ist das ersaufen des recht im mistloch der gnade"). It was very uncharacteristic of Pestalozzi. He had it printed on leaflets and plastered them all over town during the bazaar period.

One year layer he joined the Communist Party in Basle. This lasted only a short time. He realized they were all a bunch of hypocrites. On the August 1 national independence day, he and his girl friend of the moment put up a large poster on the main road reading "Patrioten - Idioten." Everyone was furious, and blamed the Communists, who were then constrained to take large newspaper ads to say that they were the only real patriots. (T. does not want this used, in case he ever wants to go to Moscow). Note: J. says 80% of Communists in Basle came from Catholic minority.

From 1948 on, Jean was an anarchist. "Joining and then leaving the Communist Party made it unnecessary to revolt against the church," he says -- the church was never of any importance to him. At that time he associated with a group of "beautiful anarchists" whom the war had thrown together in Basle. There was a Polish ex-communist who had fought in Spain; a German who changed his name from Mueller to Max Stirner, and who wrote books and organized the first (1948) collective -- a milk distribution group -- in Berlin; an American student named Balman, there because of weak lungs, who worked as a guardian in a mental hospital and who had carefully calculated the exact number of calories necessary to sustain him for two years while he finished his studies at the university. They used to meet every night at a place on the outskirts of town, and talk endlessly until morning. Karl Jaspers, then at the university, was invited by Balman and came several times. Jaspers wanted to establish order in the discussion, but "we kept posing absurdities, paradoxes, going in all directions. We talked violently, and we would have Kierkegaard on the table. The individual and the collective -- that was the main problem that

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born
interested us, that we felt had to be solved. You are part of a collective --i.e. society -- and your life ~~xxxxxx~~ is the prowess of individualizing yourself. We did not respect Jaspers." He always talked as a professor, and we always tried to confound him."

Jean went through another heavy reading period -- mostly anti-communist literature. But also books by Henry Morgan on primitive societies, by Bachofen on TK. He knew Marx and Engels, and Bakunin. For six months he did nothing but read. Anarchism seemed to answer the problem of the individual versus the collective -- "To have become an anarchist in 1948 was to solve the problem." Anarchism was individualism, then. Since that time Jean has read almost nothing -- no longer necessary for him. He finds Sartre and Camus too easy, superficial, banal -- "they vulgarised and oversimplified very important ideas; they failed to astonish me."

1950
Jean and Eva lived in a large, empty house in Basle. The landlord had been unable to rent it because it was too big, so they moved in with no furniture. Here, Jean began his first important experiments with motion.

He took the doors off their hinges, and suspended them from the ceiling at various heights (using chains or wires). Each one was fitted out with a motor, and Jean, who had read Gabo and others about the de-materialisation of forms through speed, caused them to revolve at high speeds while he and Eva and their friends watched from the safety of protective shelters. Jean also destroyed his own previous sculptures by revolving them at high speed until they fell apart. "It was a very nice feeling, like being on a missile range. It was like fireworks."
Mondrian,"
He was making constructivist sculpture then. And he was "stunned by ~~xxxxxxxx~~

govt.
1951
Still living in Basle, he was given a commission to create a wire ~~xxxx~~ structure for the Milan Trade Fair. He used 11 kilometers of wire, and an arrangement of moving lights that didn't work. Spoerri says it was a sensation/ Jean says it wasn't very good, and won't talk about it.

1952
Left Switzerland for good ("the people are drowning in comfort") and established self in a small cafe-("really a bordello")-hotel on the Rue Pierre Leroux (15th), the Hotel du Petit Berry. Jean and Eva lived here for two years. Jean was then working on wire constructions without motors, that you wound up tight and then watched unwind with jerks and lurches of the spoked wheels. Eva used to laugh until it hurt because they were a perfect parody of the Swiss watch, and Jean's revolt against all things Swiss.

"After that I became serious," says Jean.

1953
His new wire constructions were made with a serious effort to create plastic form. But nothing was ever fixed. Everything he did, and does, must always transform itself constantly. In movement he found the escape from fixation, which to Tinguely is death. "A big year for him," says Spoerri (free card - obsessed with motion)

1954
The first black and white reliefs. Modelled frankly after Arp, Kandinsky, Malevich forms. Suprematist constructions that are not fixed, that move. His work was shown this year for the first time at the Galerie Arnaud, a tiny room on the Rue du Four. In his second exhibition at Arnaud, the same year, he

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showed moving point of white against black background -- motor-driven, the wires revolved at high speed and the effect was what Jean calls "anti-television sets, thing to look at instead of television." Made first sale: 30,000 francs (abt $100.)

Jean and Eva were "agreeably poor," and constantly involved in casual or notsocasual affairs with others. Jean went to Fontainbleau for six months and made machines that operated by wind-power. He came back to the Petit Berry.

1955
Moved to Impasse Ronsin,, in February. See Pollack cards.

Participated in ~~fixx~~ Denise Rene show of"Le Mouvement." see Hulten letter, Breer card. His meta-mechanical robot drew, painted, made music, and animated neighboring pictures in ways not altogether agreeable to his fellow artists in the show. This was also the first time Jean saw something by Duchamp -- a Demi Hemispphere. The effect was enormous.

Jean worked like mad in 1955, making reliefs, wire sculptures, meta-matics (meta - beyond; matic - machine: Beyond the machine). His work began to be shown abroad, in group shows in Berne and Stickholm. Once bought 250 motors, for abt $4 each.
> Summer in Stockholm — see Hulten's letter

1956
Second show at Denise Rene, solo. (What shown?) Group shows in France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Germany.

1957
Exhibition at Galerie Edouard Loeb in Paris.

Jean was in a serious automobile accident this year. Quite badly hurt, with ligaments torn in both legs. He was in the hospital for several weeks, and immobilised for four months. When Eva, ~~xxx~~ broke and in desperation, went for help to Denise Rene, she grudgingly gave her 200 francs -- ~~about~~ less than $1.00 This seemed a great joke to Eva and Jean. While he lay in the Boucicaut hospital in the 15th arrondissement, Jean saw the development of the Algerian war in the Arabs who kept coming into the ward, cut up or dying of wounds. He became attached to the white peace of the hospital.

For two years, in 1956 and 1957, Jean did "absolutely nothing." But after his recovery he started doing meta-matics exclusively. Built racing car with Paolo Veloz.
Saw Klein's exhibition "Le Vide" (see card)

1958
First "Concert for Seven Pictures" at Iris Clert. A huge success, televised by French RDF and attended by hundreds who kept gallery open until midnight every night. See Iris Clert notes. Did Iris Clert suggest putting coin in machine? Perhaps. But, says Billy K., "Jean always puts ideas in other ~~1222z prop~~ person's head."

1959
(February) Second "Concert for Seven Pictures" (complete fusion of image and sound) at Galerie Schmela in Dusseldorf, preceded by Jean's stunt in the airplane, (owning Cessna) from which he dropped 150,000 copies of his manifesto "Für Statik" over the city. The stunt didn't work too well, typically -- Jean discovered that in winter, the air over a city is much warmer than the air in the country; so instead of falling, the leaflets ~~flew~~ soared back up on the warm air and were carried out to the country; few fell in Dusseldorf, but Jean regards this as a splendid joke. Why did he do it? "To defend myself against the German spirit. To say something they could really understand. The Germans were accepting me too easily -- I wanted to perturb them." Reports Time: 'One man picked up a copy read it then broke his foot... Tinguely was delighted. 'Some will say, very good. Others will object. The overall result will be just what I wanted: total confusion.'

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5-5-5

Time's writeup of the Dusseldorf show mentions sound effects made by hidden camshafts striking cowbells, teakettles etc., while three recorded voices intoned simultaneously: "An apparatus of Tinguely is useless." "An apparatus of Jean Tinguely is meaningful." "An apparatus of Tinguely moves only to move."

Dusseldorf show broadcast over German TV and radio. Jean's enigmatic comment afterwards: "I refuse to be persecuted by Jean Tinguely."

July: Exhibition of metamatics at Iris Clert. Commissioned to do two large (16 x 31 foot) works for new opera house in Gelsenkirchen, Germany -- check this.

October: Paris Biennale. Jean built an immense drawing machine with a gas motor. Refused for inside Musee Moderne, then allowed him to install it outside, where it was made a great sensation, created 38,000 drawings. Andre Malraux said twas a good machine, and added: "L'Etat n'a pas a marquer de preferences. Il doit seulement aider les artistes." This, altho' balloon containing perfumed (Italian bordello) exhaust exploded in his face. Iris Clert says the machine walked, danced, made paintings by the yard, and that Jean was paid $60 a day just to be there and tend it. Newsfotos show him, machine, and Eiffel in bg. This really made Tinguely.

October-November: One man show at Kaplan Gallery in London. Lecture at ICA in London -- check this. see spectator's letter. (Nov. 12) (Sold 10 metamatics, one to St. Louis B-B., plus a wire comb. to Mod Mus.)

1960

January: First New York show at Staempfli. New York a major experience for Jean. He lived with Hulbeck, saw everything and everyone -- Rauschenberg, Stankiewicz, Johns Buchamp etc. Discovered junk. Loved spirit of the place -- the uneasiness, the tension. "I have the same rhythm as New York," he told Jerene Jones. "It exasperates and inspires me. The forces the virility, the intensity, the joie de vivre." In Paris, he told me "New York is the center of the cultural world. It was extremely important for me to come there and see what Rauschenberg and Stankiewicz were doing -- it was a liberating experience. There's a real tension in the air, an uneasiness (inquietude) that makes you feel as though you're living on the edge of a precipice ('which is just where he likes to be,' said Nicky de S.P.). It makes Paris and Rome and Milan seem provincial." Jean agrees that "there is danger of a too-ready acceptance in New York, the chic of being avant garde; but I'd rather run that risk than live in neglect in France."

New York: "Man and machine are much more closely allied here. New York is a crystallization of that form of industrialization that has swept the world. The skyscraper itself is a form of machine. The American house is a machine. The spirit of the machine dominates here. For the American, the machine is not the problem it is for Europeans. Is it true that you had automobiles that were just left, abandoned on the streets during the big snowstorm last winter, and never picked up again? That could never happen in Europe. In Sweden, if you make a scratch on a television set the whole family is upset. There is even something called "car culture" in Sweden, classes where people learn how to care for their cars. The machine in Europe is not assimilated the way it is here. New York is a perfect monster.

New York, in fact, says Jean, was the only place he could possibly have conceived his self-destroying machine (for which see separate notes).

May: Show at Galerie des Quatre Saisons, Paris (Note: Preceded by group show of Nouveaux Realistes, Milan, April). Six great machines pushed through the streets by Spoerri's crowd, Jean arrested en route to Rue de Grenelle, etc. "The police were very sweet," Hulten recalls. (Circus Parade)

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The Quatre Saisons show lasted from 14-23 May, and caused a stir. Some machines made paintings, others made sculpture. One actually sawed sculptures in half. The sculpting machine worked by having spectator sit on seat at top and roll a barrel with his feet; the barrel set in motion a hammar and chisel that chipped away at a block of stone.

TK Date: Show at Krefield, Germany, featured a machine to destroy museums. (The Krefield Museum had given him carte blanche). The machine beat furiously against a wall but failed to erase it.

October: Show at Kuntshalle in Berne, with Norbert Kricke and Bernhard Luginbuhl. This show caused an enormous furor in Switzerland, was considered a national disgrace. "C'est un scandale qu'un institution publique expose des ordures de cette fumiste Tinguely, avide de la publicite, menteur..." Even Jean's mother wrote him a scandalised letter, saying it was a tragedy that such an intelligent boy as he was should be reduced to this, and predicting that he would end up in jail. Jean has never sold a work in Switzerland -- but get story from Billy K. about "Il est minuit Dr. Schweitzer."

Tinguely now known world-wide, largely as result of Homage. Written up in newspapers as far East as Tokyo. And it was entirely natural for him to play leading role in the big event of 1961 -- the motion show.

1961
Comparaisons at Musee d'Art Moderne in Paris -- the fur piece and its aroma.

Amsterdam (March): Jean had a huge piece outside, abt 30 or 40 feet high, flapping and beating itself and thrashing and delighting the children. Inside were 20 or so more, of all kinds -- one of the most popular had eight different motors that could be switched off an on independently. Agam was extremely annoyed at Spoerri for giving Tinguely so much space, and complained that T's things distracted from those of everyone else -- which was certainly true. "But the really great event," recalls William Seitz, "was at the opening. Now, it is absolutely characteristic of Tinguely's machines at their best to work poorly. A Tinguely drawing machine with a gas motor was set up in the coffee shop, where everyone went first for the reception. It was supposed to be painting pictures and blowing its exhaust into a great balloon, which would eventually burst, and then everyone would have to flee the smoke and the fumes (Italian bordello again) in consternation. Sandberg was completely tolerant. Well, the machine was tested ten minutes beforehand, and worked perfectly. But at the opening it just refused to start. They never did get it going, so Sandberg took everyone into another room for wine and ginevra. "

Tinguely himself says someone -- a jealous Amsterdam artist - poured beer in the gas motor.

"There was a whole room full of anguishing, frightening machines of Tinguely," Seitz continues. "They're only funny on the surface, you know. One of them was pounding on a sort of anvil, and people kept putting glasses and plates and things into it and watching them break. Tinguely's machines keep breaking down, of course, and he always has to be around to fix them. He's always covered with grease. He bought a white shirt for the Amstersam opening, but never got around to changing into it. He works all the time, constantly."

On Sunday after the opening, Jean, Nicky, Pontus, Elizabeth, and Seitz drove way into the country to a place near the canal, where they set up Nicky's target pictures and shot at them with a .22

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ALEXANDER IOLAS GALLERY
15 EAST 55TH STREET
NEW YORK 22

PL 5-6778

PARIS
196 BLV'D. SAINT-GERMAIN

GENEVA
14 RUE ETIENNE DUMONT

December 9, 1964

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
The New Yorker
25 West 43
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Tomkins,

You will find enclosed an up-dated resume of Jean Tinguely's activities. Please call me if you need further translation.

Yves Klein died in Paris the 6 of June 1962 at 34 years of age from a heart attack.

I have received considerable material from Paris regarding Klein...most of it in French. Should you care to look over any of the information I received, I would be glad to loan it to you.

Trust this information will be of some value to you.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Gilbertson

Charlotte Gilbertson, Assistant Director

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Jean Tinguely - some thoughts

Tinguely doesn't feel he's done anything important yet. His strange experiments are all steps along the way to finding something about himself, or perhaps they are a means of escaping the fixity, the static monster that pursues him as it pursues everyone. The pyramid is chasing him. He knows he will be caught some day, just as Giacometti (whom he admires) has been caught -- Giacometti who does not even see that what he is doing is a work of art! But as long as he can keep on experimenting, he is still free.

By using movement, Jean can prevent people from standing in front of his work and talking about it knowingly. Homage was in a way the ideal solution -- utterly transient and yet it remains in the minds of some observers.

Accepting life means accepting movement-change-death. Man tries to stop life by building cathedrals and pyramids. But life is play, life is movement. And, if you accept life, you have to accept death as well.

Movement is a means of liberating onesself from the convention of art.

"Man Ray is old now, but Duchamp isn't -- Duchamp is always tomorrow. His irony is not cerebral. Duchamp's intelligence is completely the product of his instinct.

"Since I've lost the notion of art, I've acquired a great many new liberties."

Jean will work on a stage prod. by Jean Vilar this summer, outdoors, in Avignon Palace des Papes. Ballet with Tinguely effects - smoke, fire, etc.

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Interview with Jean Tinguely (No. 1)

Q. What did Homage a New York mean to you?

Homage a New York was for me an attempt to liberate myself from the material. The best way to do this was to make it self-destroying, like Chinese fireworks, so that during the event -- and naturally it became an event, a spectacle -- all these materials that had been ~~made~~ ~~into~~ ~~from~~ objects, machines, parts of machines became part of the sculpture; even the smoke, even the smells involved became part of it.

I say Chinese fireworks because that is the best example in classic art. Chinese fireworks were an art, a very powerful art. In placing myself on that terrain I obtained great liberty with respect to the materials I used, for all these objects were put to use without binding me, you understand. I could maintain complete freedom -- I never had to worry about making them more solid, for example. They could live as long as they liked, and at the same time they were placed in a situation that enabled them to be fragile; they had the good fortune to be endowed with the qualities that are normally found only in an improvisation, while at the same time being part of a great sculptural machine.

What was important for me was that afterward there would be nothing, except what remained in the minds of a few people, continuing to exist in the form of an idea. This was for me very liberating. The next day they just swept up and every trace was gone. It was just a marvelous thing people talked about...

Why liberating? Because I was totally engaged and yet totally free, It gave me every opportunity and left me in a semi-trance, in a sort of dream. It was for me the ideal solution, it was the form of art that seemed to me the most perfect I have yet found. It could be stripped of all significance, or it could be interpreted in a symbolic sense; it could be taken as a spectacle, a rape, a joke, a gadget -- anything you wish. It wasn't the idea of a machine committing suicide that fascinated me primarily; it was the freedom that belonged to its ephemeral aspect -- ephemeral like life, you understand. It was the opposite of the cathedrals, the opposite of the skyscrapers

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around us, the opposite of the museum idea, the opposite of the petrification in a fixed work of art.

It would be beautiful if every work of art were like that. Perhaps they are all the same -- even the Venus de Milo, with the marvellous aspect it has today, has been modified, time-worn; it is truly more than the artist made it, and we have certainly accepted this modification...

Q. Do you satirize machines?
No, no, no. I don't want to put them to death. For me the machine is above all an instrument that permits me to be poetic. If you respect the machine, if you enter into a game with the machine, perhaps you could make a joyous machine -- by joyous I mean free, a machine that is absolutely poetised. That would be a marvellous thing.

Q. Hulten once said that you made 'happy machines.'
I'm absolutely in agreement with him.

Q. Should all good machines commit suicide?
If it's a good machine, it can certainly commit suicide, why not? But, for me, I believe that Homage to New York was decisive because it showed me the multiplicity of possibilities with which one could work, and which no one had dared to utilise in Europe. That machine freed me and showed me possibilities that I hadn't thought of. It enabled me to go ahead faster, to put behind me the cycle of experiments that I had been involved with for some time.

Q. Would you explain your idea of the functional use of chance? * → (over)
The introduction of chance into a work of art has been accomplished by life itself. It just happens. If you look today at the paintings of Raphael, they are no longer the same as what you would have seen in the 15th century; and even if you reconstituted them in their original aspect, your own feelings and reactions would not be the same. Chance gets into every act of perception. Chance is permanent in life, it is almost a law of life. This pretentious business of wanting to subsist outside the conventions of life seems clearly impossible to me, it leads only to petrifications without hope.

Q. What were some of the chance elements in Homage?
The event itself, what took place, was absolutely unforseen. Many of The

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* Jean Arp once stated that in the best sculptures the elements are placed "by the law of chance."
- Vision in Motion

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things that were planned didn't come off at all; other things happened that weren't intended, like the roller that kept rolling up. Or the last two notes on the piano that played for nearly fifteen minutes, over and over, the same two sounds -- it was very beautiful, very moving, I thought, and absolutely unplanned that one part of the piano should continue to play while the piano was being consumed by fire and one portion of its mechanism was already completely destroyed, and still those two notes in the midst of the fire still playing, calmly, sadly, monotonously, those two -- it was very moving. Many people told me afterward that it was for them a terrible thing. One lady was weeping on the balcony, all alone, she found it so sad. It was sad in certain aspects, in the smoke for example.

We had put so many things into it that it was impossible to tell what had worked and what hadn't. But each object selected had the chance to be a poem in itself, whether it was an odor, a cloud of smoke, a noise, or an explosion (breaking). In my imagination -- and my imagination has not always been right -- I conceived a certain result, I told myself it must be like this, like that; and it was at the same time supremely and diametrically opposite to the result planned. It was this aspect of total freedom that seemed so beautiful to me.

Q. What does complete liberty for you require?

I don't know -- one must live a good deal to arrive at that point. You no longer know where you are, who you are. You are full, you do what you must do -- the means you use don't matter at all. I am speaking of liberty with respect to myself.

Q. And the Homage experience was a great liberation for you?

Yes. It was very surprising, what it did for me. It helped me take a great step forward, in order to concentrate more, live more. It was of the first order of importance for me. It made me realise that the materials I used were no longer of such importance, and I could begin to forget them. Since that date I have been more free in all respects. I'm hardly even aware of what I'm working with. I don't even know how these last things of mine were made, I did them without being aware of it. And all these objects -- rheostats, furs, radio parts, springs -- all have their different characteristics, they are light and voluminous, or heavy and small, and this influences the rhythm even when they are motivated by the same force, the same energy. So that each time I can achieve improvisations that are comparable perhaps to the ? that you draw with a piece of charcoal on paper.

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Always with the same charcoal, each time with a new sheet of paper. And you let yourself go completely, you work purely automatically with means that are nevertheless new (I don't mean that I invented them, but they are not yet established in the domain of art -- means like the systematic utilisation of a permanent energy) -- with these means I have succeeded in disengaging myself so completely that I can truly use them as though I were that piece of charcoal, and were writing in the air. By accepting the materials, using whatever comes to hand, doing exactly what I want, that is to say I no longer knew what I was doing, I left myself completely alone, and that is what Homage a New York did for me, and it is very important, and I begin now, already, to forget all that...

I do not even know any more just what Homage to New York was. I believe and pass on rumors about it. I have begun to be completely an observer of it myself, because I've already forgotten that it was me who made it. I begin to forget myself, which is the same as saying I begin to realise myself. It's conceivable that this is the last interview I'll ever give, that afterwards I'll begin to arrive at a state in which it's impossible to know who I am, even to continue to live. But it is as if I had spoken to you before of a monster inside that pushed me, pushed me, pushed me toward a certain point in myself where I would have to end it -- that's to say where I would have to be reunited with the experiences I've had, where the experiences I've had and I would become one; where I would be finally arrived there with all artists who ever worked in granite with a hammar and chisel, with the most classic methods, scribbling on a wall. And I already see the day when I will find myself turned into a kind of phantom, of smoke and dust and powder and vapor and odor, and I could believe that I would be as stable as steel, the most fixed metal in the world... Everyone laughs, it is strangely easy to laugh, it is certainly necessary to laugh. But I laugh less all the time.

see p. 10

I know why I laugh -- when you have something new, then you are seized by the comic aspect of it. I laughed a great deal at Homage, I was the best spectator. I had never seen anything like it. It was crazy, what happened.

Q. Why the title?

Listen, I found that in the garden of the Modern Museum, surrounded

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by those skyscrapers, those monsters, those cathedrals, those -- I don't know what -- New York is all the same a beautiful attempt to create a definitive fixation of civilization, and I thought that it was very nice that down there in the garden was a little machine that was beginning to conduct itself otherwise, or perhaps to conduct itself in an exemplary fashion.

Q. But New York isn't fixed, it's always destroying and rebuilding itself... I see New York otherwise. I'll tell you something, Manhattan is becoming more and more one great cathedral, and they tear it down only to make it more tremendous -- as they did the pyramids. If I had been near an Egyptian pyramid, I would have done homage to the pyramid of Cheops. A machine like New York-- and it is a machine -- needs to be ameliorated...

You asked why I gave it the title Homage a New York..It might seem pretentious on my part to render homage to New York, a city I had never seen before. But the whole thing was in every way -- sober. Listen, I am not from New York, I see it for the first time, this was a way of responding, of making contact. I've never tried to analyse this, but it probably gave me a jolt. A few days, a few weeks in this town -- surely not a desert would probably have inspired me too -- but New York certainly did. I saw this magnificent accumulation of human power and I found I could calmly make a little addition (unpleasantness / nuage) there.

Q. After Homage, where can you go?

Listen, I don't have ideas. I've never had an idea. What matters to me is living. I have ideas in general, but when I speak of them, I joke, and when I joke I am already outside myself. But when I actually do something I swear to you that I cannot have an idea, it is not even a question of that...It is much simpler. Homage was not an idea realised by the fact, but it was the fact;it was a thing that had to be done.

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Interview with Jean Tinguely (No. 2)

Q. You said that today you would begin your 'dream' of Homage a New York

Yes, all right... You see, the idea of Homage a New York was not to begin with the idea of a title, but the idea of a work, a work that must be carried out under ideal conditions -- temporary, transient, fleeting -- that is to say conditions that would allow the work to evaporate, disappear, put itself outside society, outside the frame of all other works of art, in the sense that no trace of it would remain except in the mind of a few spectators. It would be a work that evolved in permanence, a work whose existence was limited yet by the same token not limited at all but infinite.

The next day even, there were people who gave different accounts of it. One person said it had been primarily red, another that it was white with red smoke. This pleased me very much because it proved people had understood my classic, noisy, fragrant spectacle; they had understood that this thing was red, and white too, and a lot of other things.

Movement, the attempt to make something that really moves, is an attempt that comes very close to life. Life is movement. Everything transforms itself, everything modifies itself ceaselessly, and to stop it, to declare a work of art fixed, seems to me an absurdity.

Q: Is the idea of permanence important to you in any sense?

The permanence of life seems to me the most important thing I can imagine. That is to say the non-petrification, the non-stopping of all life is important in the sense that it permits me to live and to create living work, and then life becomes open, changeable, adaptable. I know that there is another phenomenon that enters into the game, the wishful-thinking phenomenon. Perhaps what I'm doing is impossible, perhaps it's true that you can't do it, that it's a thing that doesn't exist and never will exist. But maybe not. Maybe it does exist, quite simply, just as life exists, or spectacles; as one looks at a film, or watches a child playing or a cat playing, as we watch the tracks that pass in the street, as we live every day ourselves. Wanting to erect opposite this life a stabilised work, even in the spiritual sense, seems to me illusory. And that's why I don't do it.

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Q. Is your work anti-art, as some people maintain?

Anti-art, in the sense that art is a petrification of life. To try to stop life in mid-flight and recapture it in the form of a work of art, a sculpture or a painting, seems to me to be a mockery of life, of the intensity of life.

Q. Is your work a new form of art?

In sum, no. When I see the Chinese who made their firework displays six thousand years ago, I don't think this is new. But when I see that we are still in the presence of 19th century painting, of sculpture that could be five hundred years old, I think maybe yes, this is something new.

Q. You are aware that your machine enraged a lot of New York painters?

Perhaps they knew they did not have the technical means to work in that direction. It may also have been a question of their seeing me in an ideal situation that every artist would like -- being able to turn his work into a spectacle, and at the same time to declare it an acte gratuit, something so free that you could accept its total disappearance... It's possible these artists were simply a little jealous. They all defend their own work -- but compared to a demonstration like that in the Modern Museum it was evidently very difficult to maintain the comparison, because that was something absolutely splendid, in several ways!'

Q. Since then, have you thought much about Homage?

I have forgotten it completely. Totally. It's true. I forgot it because I had to, otherwise it would have exerted too great a fascination for me. I didn't want to make a second self-destroying machine, or a third. I wanted to translate the technical experience I had gained into a number of other works, which I've done and which have been characterized by a greater force of expression, I'm sure, and a much greater expressiveness in motion. Movement is the main thing, and the material is just a pretext to make it move, you understand? ... At the moment I'm in the process of trying to get the devil by the tail, that's to say trying to get hold of this marvelous thing that is a kind of anti-matter -- matter in motion, becoming spectacle, becoming revelation almost. This is what was given to me in the experience of the machine in the museum in New York, and I have it, I'm not mistaken.

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Q. What sort of state of mind were you in while working on Homage?

I had put myself into a sort of trance. I was in a state of great agitation, I was in a semi-dream, I became delerious. Everyone who came to visit me there got sick right afterward, but not me. I didn't catch cold. It seemed very important to me not to be sick. If I had gotten sick, I would have been almost too embarrassed to go on -- I would have thought that it was something unconscious that made me sick. It was horribly cold. They had given me a magnificent stove that worked fine, but it made too much noise. The noise and the stink seemed like a bad omen to me, something that would get in the way of my work.

The sole fact was that I had put myself into this marvelous situation, that I was completely free. The very fact that I could blow up this beautiful machine gave me an unbelievable freedom. I was in front of a marvelous void and I was absolutely free. There was absolutely no one and nothing that could tell me what to do, how to do it, how high it should be, what sort of noise it should make. I could simply do everything, and that was splendid.

Q. Were you a little different afterward?

Oh yes, I've changed completely since then. You've seen my work -- terribly changed. It's become, I think, more ~~messy~~ upsetting. So many people start to laugh the minute they see my machines.

Q. Do you have more confidence in yourself now?

No, I have no confidence. I can't forge confidence. I always doubt, am never reassured, am always tortured by dreams, ideal dreams, by the marvelous things that I could make and beside which the things I've already made seem like pale little ~~mimetisms~~ imitations, ridiculous. I would like to go much further still, I am absolutely unsatisfied...

~~Xx~~ I would like to lose my notion of existence, almost; I would like only to be, and work...At night, I go to sleep and I wake up, and begin to work; and the next morning I wake up again and discover that I've done amazing things while I was sleeping...To struggle (scrap) with life is very difficult -- you're always running into sharp corners and motors that don't run fast enough and insufficient electricity and colors that aren't right -- you run into a great many things that aren't right. But to tell the truth, when I work, I dream...

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Q. Was Homage itself a dream, a good dream?
Yes, that's good, it was a dream, a little nightmare...

Q. Does everyone laugh in the presence of your work?
Laugh? Not at all. Some people grow pale, some tremble, some begin to cry. Once I spent all day trying to make a machine, soldering, struggling with the material; I forgot to eat ~~in the evening~~ all day, and I finished about 8 pm; it was dark, it was cold, and I made it work -- I started it working to find out what sort of sound it made -- for sound interests me enormously, I work with sound, it is almost a kind of material for me -- and I studied the sound, regulated it, went away, regulated it again, changd it; I changed the motor, put in a faster motor, but that didn't satisfy me so I took it apart and changed its outside appearance, and suddenly, about 10 pm, I discovered that the machine terrified me, actially made me afraid. It was like a phantom ~~xxx~~ or a monster crouching there. And when I saw it again in an exhibition there was by chance someone standing in front of it laughing his head off. I was completely demoralised by that machine, for me it was a horrible machine, but it was what I wanted to make -- and here was someone, several weeks later, laughing.

good anecdote

There were similar situations in Homage a New York. Everyone laughed -- they could just as well have cried.

Q. But you were happy over Homage
Oh, yes, I was very happy. I had been surprised by the machine, I didn't know what it would ~~do~~ become exactly during its brief existence. For me too it was something new, and I was a ~~good~~ spectator. I forcibly disengaged myself in order to see what happened -- I was very curious .

Q. What about the fire?
The fire was very important, in the sense thst it constituted a plastic element in itself. It burned not only the piano, but the rubber bicycle wheels,which made a very black smoke and which made the fire itself burn with a deep red color, at the same time sending off a smell of burning rubber. The fire played a joke on me even -- it destroyed the timer that was to set off the fire extinguisher...The fire was too important, it was not at all normal.

Q. You didn't tell the Museum about the fire beforehand?
Listen, they asked me fifty questions, and I answered three. At the

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time they asked me the questions I didn't know what I was going to do exactly, and I simply guaranteed that I wouldn't destroy the museum or injure anyone, and I kept my word. I don't feel ~~completely~~ one bit uncomfortable about the Modern Museum.

.....

Q. Would you describe again that 'monster of stability' that pursues you?

It's difficult to express logically. But I wanted to try and tell you that I am almost condemned to be myself, integrally and totally, and that I feel a sense of despair, despair in myself and in the search for the means of expression to approach myself. I feel that I have not much more time to amuse myself, to look into things, experiences, experiments; that the objects I touch are beginning to become for me incontestible the means of expression; that I can no longer choose whatever I want to work with...I would prefer to stay as long as possible in the field of experience, that is I'd like to go much further. Experiment -- which is experience. I can feel the time coming when it will be as though I no longer had the possibility of making 'experiments'. I would like hugely to make quantities of experiments before having to be simply myself, individual and incontestibly myself, doing what men like Giacometti do. Giacometti, who doesn't give a damn, who no longer thinks of the methods he uses. They have their pile of clay in front of them, they work every day, all the time, they don't even know anymore whether they have the urge, they just do it, they have to do it; they don't even know any more why they do it, and what sort of changes they're making; they are magnificently unconscious. And I have great admiration for Giacometti because I can feel his strength of expression. ~~it contains.~~ But I would really like to avoid becoming like that.

use new close (see also p. 4)

Then, this monster of stability that's behind me -- it is the threat of being forced, like a maniac, to do a certain thing. Look, I know that perhaps I've been a maniac for a long time and that for a long time I have been drowned in my artistic expression, so that I can't even discuss it, I can just make words around it. But in reality I am pinned to the wall by my means of expression.

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Q. Are you annoyed by the question, 'But is it art'?
No, no, I like that. I'm always a little afraid of being put on a pedestal, of being accepted too readily. The fact that someone says 'It's not art' makes me very happy. I never disagree -- I always say 'You're absolutely right.'

Q. What is 'le nouveau realisme'?
According to Pierre Restany, who invented the term, it refers to a certain group of artists who have become aware of a new reality of materials, who are liberated from the conventional materials for making art. There are certain artists who have become completely free, not by rebelling against the methods of classical artistic expression, but by -- pushing a little farther the freedom of expression.

Q. Who are the nouveaux realistes?
According to Restany's formula, they are Yves Klein, Arman (who makes accumulations), Mardel Rays, Niki de Saint Phalle, César, and myself.

Q. What about Rauschenberg over here?
No, precisely no. It's odd, but Rauschenberg and John Chamberlain and Jasper Johns and Stankiewicz are absolutely not nouveaux realistes. Because what is characteristic of the term nouveau realiste, is the fact that it is not composed. I forgot to mention Daniel Spoerri, who is from my point of view the only one that the term nouveau realiste really fits. The rest of us are all interested in the possibilities of expression, but our work is very composed and remains very psychological...Well, you can see that as soon as I begin to discuss the nouveau realisme I no longer understand it, but Pierre Restany can make it seem very clear, I assure you.

Q. Had you seen the work of Rauschenberg and company before you came here?
Oh yes. I saw it in the show of Sixteen Americans when it came to Paris. I had been very struck by their work, and certainly very struck by the Rauschenberg's withering (?foudroyant) personality, and by the phenomenons of John Chamberlain. Of course, I had used junk before, myself, but I could never have used it in the same spirit until New York opened the door for me. I found in New York an atmosphere that was very favorable to my own work. The spirit of Rauschenberg, John Chamberlain, Jasper Johns, John Cage and others like that

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was something new for me. It's true that today I've changed somewhat -- I'm very interested in the kind of object that you can buy instead of working always with found objects.

Q. The merchandise-destroying machine you plan for the store in Tokyo -- isn't that basically a literary rather than a plastic idea?

Not at all. For me it's not literary at all, because I see it in its plasticity. It's true that if I describe it to you it becomes a little piece of literature, but if you saw it you would think otherwise. It would become something of a spectacle, like all my works -- all my works have an aspect of spectacle. Each work, automatically, as soon as it is placed in the fourth dimension of movement, becomes inevitably a spectacle.

Q. Are you perhaps basically a stage manager, a metteur-en-scene?

A metteur-en-scene, yes. It's a good idea.

Q. A man of the theater?

It's true. Each thing I make is a little play.

Q. And the audience becomes a part of the spectacle itself?

Ah, yes, for me that always plays an important role. The visitor is man face to face with the machine, or the individual versus the collective. I love to see them in contact, such as in the case of the drawing machines with which I have invited the spectator squarely to become an actor. To enter into the game, that is to decide himself how many colors, how much time, to draw in what format, in what aspect, with which crayon, with what speed and duration -- this is in a sense to make him enter into the work of art.

Q. Would you say that Homage a New York was a Dadaist work?

Yes and no. I have a very great admiration for the dadas. But dada does not exist in me as a form of art I would like to create a priori. I have come to make things that have been compared to dada because the dadaists had been the only group of artists who had attempted experiences a little outside the methods used classically in the 14th century. A man like Marcel Duchamp, or Man Ray, or Max Ernst, or especially the Russian Constructivists were of extraordinary interest to me. You could compare my machine Homage a New York much more easily to certain constructions of Tatlin than to paintings by Max Ernst. Dada is good, and I am in every way flattered to be compared to it, it is a great honor. [Note: T. told Terence: "Dada prepared the way for modern art. The Dadaists combatted the bourgeoisie. I don't combat at all in that sense. My machine works without prejudice."]

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I don't agree at all with Huelsenbeck's version of Dada. It's too easy, he misses certain things...There are things he doesn't see.

Q. In what sense does your work differ from that of Duchamp?
Duchamp's work is so complex that I can grasp only part of it...All the artists who have been compared to Dada -- Rauschenberg, Johns, Spoerri, Saint-Phalle, Klein -- no longer produce the same effects; and this is not because their methods have changed so much, but -- it is they who have changed completely. And the shock is much less severe than formerly, Thirty-five years ago Dada was a considerable shock, but today the bourgeois has got used to swallowing art monsters, like the canvasses of Jackson Pollock and Sam Francis; the bourgeois no longer dares to laugh.

And besides, the shock of Dada was no greater than the shock of cubism, the shock of abstract art even. The resistance to abstract art came primarily from other artists who were still working with nature. That resistance seems to me something very important, but it doesn't come from the public. In my case, I can say that I make popular art. I can honestly say that people come in great number to see my exhibitions, more than come to see abstract paintings.

Abstract art has apparently become very conformist, but never popular. On the other hand, the machines I make confront the public with a new phenomenon, and they like them. The spectator is drawn at first by the novelty -- he's never seen anything like that, he listens, it speaks to him, and he is enthusiastic -- I've seen it, the contact is marvelous. It is banal of course, but it is also profound, this contact.

Q. Is it impossible now to shock the bourgeoisie?
Oh, yes, that's impossible. The only ones you can still shock are the art critics, the painters in their ivory towers who defend a certain kind of art, and even they aren't really shocked -- they just fight against you and say 'but it's not art' . They're the ones who say that, not the public. The public is happy enough, it is ready to follow many things, and it is not necessarily stupid. It is capable of participating seriously in the communication that is offered, for example, by a work of art that moves. I don't believe this is something idiotic. It's this communication I'm speaking of.

(Genauer)

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Q. Would you say that the idea of destruction is important to you?

Destruction is not an end for me, it is only a refuge (abri). The idea of destruction has no great importance for me.

Q. Do you know Bakunin's slogan that destruction is also creation?

Listen, I've read almost all of Bakunin's writings, and I do remember that slogan. I was enormously fascinated by his ideas, and it's certainly possible that some of them remain with me. But it's been ten years since I've had a book of his in my hands, or any book of that kind. I must reread him...

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In order to enable you to understand properly why and to what extent I could have such lasting influence on Jean Tinguely, I must tell you how things were in Basle and in our art school at the time. - Born in England, I studied at the Academy in Berlin. There I met the young Swiss student painter T.E. We got married in 1925 and moved to T.E.'s home town, Basle. Many things there were strange and unintelligible to me: why did they not have any snowy mountains or cows there, which to me are the symbols of Switzerland? In Basle they did not have any icecream either at the time, although I loved it so much. Not to mention bathrooms and central heating, two things which I regarded as absolute necessities, were precious rarities, for the financial elite only. At my age of 21 I was an enthusiastic dancer of the Charleston, but in Basle they danced only waltzes, apart from the fact that my husband was a proud non-dancer which he considered appropriate for a serious artist. In other words, slightly terrified I had the romantic feeling of having been transported back to the deepest Middle Ages. For at least five more years my blind love prevented me from noticing how medieval the position of the Swiss housewife is: the ideal Swiss woman is a humble gray little mouse, the faithful servant of her husband, whose only interests are confined to housework. Spirit, art, education and politics are "matters for men", and only the worst blue-stockings would deal with these. In professional life the Swiss woman is tolerated at best, limited exclusively to low professions and wage brackets, and barred from all profitable and honorable chances to advance. - But I did not know this, and when I grasped it with horror, I was firmly determined to be an exception, and for good, being more or less successful in this. - When I gradually discovered that even my artist-husband favored the Swiss ideal woman, I was shocked and unable to understand why he got the idea to marry me in particular! How little did I resemble his ideal! Exactly those "matters for men", art and politics were of extreme interest to me and I was dealing with them much more than with my household which I considered as a compulsory sideline at best, a necessary evil, but not as a life task. What was worse, I did not notice this at all, and with the greatest unconcern I did what I believed to be right. Although artistic endeavors were strictly prohibited for me during my 20 years' "artist marriage", because my husband did not tolerate any "competition in his own home". But I was allowed to earn as much money as I liked, even with such artistic chores which he did not consider to be very honorable: utility graphic work, children's books etc. When I was thoroughly fed up with the eternal misery of the - oh, so artistic - attic idyl, I decided, against the wishes of my strict lord, to eliminate it by means of profitable professional work. After I found out which courses were not yet being taught at the Basle Art School, I began to train myself in those fields which I intended to teach there in the future, tenatiously, perseveringly and secretly, in order to be able to show proof of my abilities. Then I set up a well thought-out teaching schedule, and betook myself to the director of the State Art School, carrying the schedule and many other supporting papers in my briefcase. I did not mind at all the fact that no woman could be employed in this institute, where only "masculine" professions were being taught, as I had the modest intention to teach the following subjects there nevertheless: fashion drawing, nude drawing, studies of clothing

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and folds, book illustration and - last but not least - a new subject: "material studies", namely non-objective, free compositions with all materials imaginable; a subject which I held already at that time to be the most important basis of any artistic creation whatsoever. Rather a bold undertaking in the small town of Basle, where there were no abstract artists yet, but only those who detested this "absurd" artistic trend. The director of the Art School at the time was a magnificent old gentleman with a grim seal's mustache, without any prejudices, full of incorruptible feeling of quality for all matters artistic, and with a fine sense for pedagogy. His behavior was on the rough side, instead of polite, but he meant it better than it seemed. He studied my drawings which he liked very much, and the teaching schedule, about which he was amazed, and he asked: "How do you think you are going to teach? You did not have any pedagogical training?" I replied cheerfully: "Oh, this is quite simple: I always do it in such a way that the students have fun working with me!" - "Excellent! You can start with us in the next semester!", he said, pressed my hand and I ran home, intoxicated with my first, such easy, victory in a field which theoretically was so unpromising. I was a federal employee now, and although my salary was barely 2/3 of what my colleagues got, we were terribly rich, and we had no more financial worries in the future! I was now the first married woman teacher in Basle, where all women teachers must be sour ascetics. And for this honor I must thank the objectivity of the old principal and the fact that my artist-husband did not make any money. The fact that I was the only female teacher of our art school remained for 27 years a personal offense to my colleagues, for which they hated me until I resigned my position in 1956 because I married again, in order to paint without being disturbed. On top of all this I was young, pretty and had a sharp tongue, which they resented very much. But the worst thing was my teaching method and the material studies in particular, this bastard product of abstract art which deeply hurt the classic sense of art of my loveable colleagues. Only the old principal was enthusiastic with this subject in particular. But the colleagues were sitting on the high professor's horse and felt themselves threatened by everything I did: I treated my students as having equal rights, not the way my colleagues did it, who ruled despotically and arrogantly, out for devout respect, which I renounced readily. The best friendly relationship prevailed in my classes, and my students would do anything for me. My courses were always overcrowded, because these young people easily noticed how much I enjoyed teaching. My method was to taboo plagiarism in order to encourage the independent imagination of the students, their peculiarities and own wills to find their own means of expression. Furthermore I did everything to arouse the conscious insight into the creative laws and the ability to express the critical examination of their own works in clear, simple words. Although artistic work by pure feeling is very beautiful, professional practice in this field in particular requires the ability to make oneself understood to the people who commissioned the work. In all my courses the work had to be finished by a certain deadline (this was also in preparation of the future practical work, to which the students get used with difficulty if they did not learn it in school). Until then I corrected carefully

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the work of each student, and I took care not to impair the peculiarity of the student. When all works were completed, an exhibition was held in class, and the students acted as judges. I intervened only when misunderstandings or injustices occurred. The purpose of this judging, with the aim of picking out gradually the best works, was to teach the students by comparing the living visual material of the class works, to see the mistakes and advantages of an artistic work. At the same time they learned in the course of this work to express themselves clearly and succinctly. Frequently there were long and interesting discussions which made it possible for me to get the students to know very well. The most interesting subject for myself as well as for the students were the material studies, because new ground was being worked here, tasks which could not be solved by referring back to any old tradition. These seemingly easy tasks which actually always proved to be quite difficult, were for instance: tangents - or: rough and smooth, - red dot in white field, - much gray and few colors, - squares with various proportions, - technical and organic forms and materials, - expression values of color, shape and structure, etc. Experiences were also depicted here non-objectively, such as: heat, - festive, - floating, etc. During the 27 years of my work at the Art School the students showed nowhere so much enthusiasm as they did working in this subject, which anticipated the much admired art works of a Pollock, Burri, Kline, Tapies or Tinguely.

It was around 1938-1940 when one of my former, one of the most gifted, pupils who already was chief decorator of a large department store, sent a new apprentice to all of the subjects I was teaching:
Jean Tinguely. He was a short youth, about 15 years old. He was not exactly pretty, rather he was the darkly pondering type with his heavy dark eyebrows which were grown together above the nose, and beneath them dark eyes were blinking critically and clingingly. Very soon it became evident how versatile and strongly Tinguely was gifted: strikingly intelligent and quick of repartee, he was a brilliant, sensitive draftsman whose material compositions were full of inexhaustible imagination and surprising sharpness, and whose words were critical, to the point and often bitingly ironic. Very well-read in almost all fields, he was receptive to all spiritual, artistic, political or other in any way interesting, topical problems, which showed his extremely strong spiritual vitality already at this youthful age. Everything he did or said was decided and clear, which made him look grown up. He was not at all sentimental, but he was very much in demand by young ladies and effeminate youths. They were literally fighting for him and inside the Art School there were many tragi-comedies and tragedies, scenes of nervous breakdowns and jealousy, because "Janno" (as he was nicknamed) gleefully took them all for a ride. He was not at all concerned about the ruckus which he had caused, he was amused by it, if anything. Apparently these things did not interest him at all, which was in curious contrast to the wide-awake brilliance with which he worked. I did not like the virtually sportive nonchalance with which he treated matters of feeling. When I once told it straight to his face, he bellowed with laughter and replied: "This is the way I am, I cannot help it." I was

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suprised by this lack of restraint. Apparently moral considerations were not his strong point, and he continued to fool cold-bloodedly all those naive young men and ladies who adored him. The fuss reached its peak in our small-town community when Janno, a few years later, married beautiful Eva, in order to shack up with her in the crumbling "Burghof" which was about ripe to be torn down, without any furniture - one could really not call this a residence. Eva, that spoiled, elfin-like creature with a skin like alabaster and dark almond eyes, who on her part had already charmed and broken many hearts with her copper-red hair, before Janno finally became the victor! In a word, Janno was really a Sunday child.- When there was an opportunity to celebrate, he participated readily, because, although he was able to concentrate admirably on his work, he also knew how to let his hair down with abandon. Shrove Tuesday, this great, unique popular festivity in Basle, which once a year wakes this mouse-gray city from its "Sleeping Beauty" sleep to exuberant life, was the right terrain for Janno: having made himself unrecognizeable by a strange costume, hidden behind a self-made, absurd mask, he was apt to play his tricks for days, without thinking of eating or sleeping. Afterwards he was lean like a tomcat, but as cheerful as ever. He enjoyed particularly to make so-called "props" and to walk or push through the streets of Basle, as it is customary on Shrove Tuesday (mardi gras). The props are caricatures of abstruse hyper-machines, concocted of all kinds of scrap, in part movable by means of primitive mechanisms and screetching, in part rigid and mute, these things are bedecked with posters or fluttering streamers with slogans, full of fresh, explanatory jokes. Manned by life-size, stuffed, wonderful-abominable dolls, dangling with shaking heads or wildly masqueraded people, these props are a main attraction in the evening on Mardi Gras in the Streets of Basle, because they are making fun of specific topical events.- There is no doubt that Jean Tinguely let himself, consciously or unconsciously, be influenced by these "props" which, in part howling and popping, in part strangely silent, but still eloquent through the charm of their materials, have a striking resemblance with Tinguely's artistic formations (of which I unfortunately saw pictures only). Janno would have had to change very much if his strange works of art were to be only playful scurrilities. The way I know him, these are more than just tension-rich compositions: similes of our over-mechanized, frequently so frighteningly unnatural times. With his grim humor and witty mischief, it seems to me that he wants to carry with this machine spook also our cultural conceit and the arrogance of certain artists to absurdity. You see, Tinguely was never superficial, and he sees through the sham tinsel of art politics and of socialite maneuverings, on which he makes his witty comments. This self-willed enfant terrible of our art period was already as a very young man highly receptive and sensitive in understanding all human events, so that one is justified in assuming that his original mentality has deepened in the course of the years, as most people grow more characteristic when maturing.

In the beginning I was wondering how long this versatile, gifted man would have to wait for success, but soon I understood that it was this versatility of his which delayed his success: frequently there are highly gifted persons who do not acgieve anything due to inner richness,

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because they are unable to concentrate. Thus it would have been difficult to predict in which field Jean Tinguely would excell. Probably he needed some time for deciding on a certain matter. I can readily imagine that some day he will be fed up with all these miracle machines, in order to switch suddenly to writing, filming or painting. I am sure he would do these things with just as much originality and wit ashis "sculpturing".

At any rate, his sense of reality will save him from letting his success pass without utilization, and I am sure that his creative abilities will inspire him with new, surprising ideas for a long time. I do not think that arrogance would suit his strange personality or that he would have fun in resting on his laurels.

Let us hope therefore that he will continue for many years to be somehow artistically productive, to his own and the joy of the entire world!

Julia Ris

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NY Times
1/28/60

Art: Machine-Like Work



John R. van Rolleghem

Jean Tinguely shown in Paris with one of the ambulating "meta-matic machines," which produce abstract paintings.

By DORE ASHTON

QUESTION: When is a machine not a machine?

Answer: When it is a meta-machine, or "meta-matic sculpture" created by Jean Tinguely, 35-year-old Swiss-born artist whose sensational works—in the pure sense of the word—are on view at the Stacmpfli Gallery, 47 East Seventy-seventh Street.

But what is a meta-machine? Fundamentally, it is any kind of machine produced by M. Tinguely that has less than one chance in a million of repeating itself. Mostly they consist of black backgrounds (black, says M. Tinguely, symbolizes absence while white symbolizes imagination, or "esprit") on which white, free-form shapes shudder, twirl, gesture extravagantly, or turn gently in ever-changing patterns. Some of them clatter profusely and accompany themselves with rhythms that come close to the Afro-Cuban rumba.

Then there are the abstraction machines—bizarre, standing objects with long arms that terminate in a clamp. If the visitor inserts a special slug, puts crayon or pen in the clamp and stands back, he sees a meta-miracle. The meta-matic machine makes a meta-matic abstraction in record meta-matic minutes. And that abstraction bears a disconcerting resemblance to what is known as "informal" or "abstract expressionist" painting. Meta-painting?

•

Since M. Tinguely is concerned only with an art constantly transforming itself, there are no beginnings and no endings in his work. Accordingly, there is no single reassuring approach to be taken when contemplating his work. You can begin anywhere. If you are soberly critical, you might regard this slot-machine production of abstractions as a satirical blow at a world gone wild with love of art. If, on the other hand, you still have the exuberant capacity for absorption that goes with childhood, you could regard these intricate objects as a source of intense amusement—an inspired encouragement to joie de vivre.

Some critics have assumed that these machines were an "anti-art" gesture in the old Dada spirit. But M. Tinguely denies it. He says he is anti-dogmatic but not anti-art because: "Art is surprising. Art can be made with anything. Art is large. Art—c'est la vie." How then is it possible to be anti-art, he asks? gesture. You *are* movement and gesture."

But M. Tinguely insists he meant nothing other than the gesture in his escapade. "I am not persecuted by M. Tinguely," he says with a half smile.

On another level, M. Tinguely represents a philosophy of art that has a long tradition. As long ago as 1910 the Russian Suprematist, Tatlin, had experimented with moving elements, seeking to "dematerialize" sculpture. Artists have long been aware that speeding objects lose their visual concreteness in the way an airplane propeller does when in motion. M. Tinguely tries to take this basic phenomenon one step further—an esthetic step—and make an "infinite" art.

His incontestable seriousness can be gauged in the exhibition, where a definite evolution can be traced. His earlier machines were wiry, spindly, with many oscillating elements jogging along. More recently, he has composed irregular white shapes, placed at different levels in relation to the backgrounds, and moved them slowly, so that they appear to turn in on themselves.

He doesn't want to "petrify an instant," as it was done in conventional painting. He sees his works as events, totally free of anecdote. "I want only to involve myself in the moving object that forever transforms itself." But this is not a "program," he is careful to add. On the contrary, his work is merely a "manifestation of freedom, of individualism."

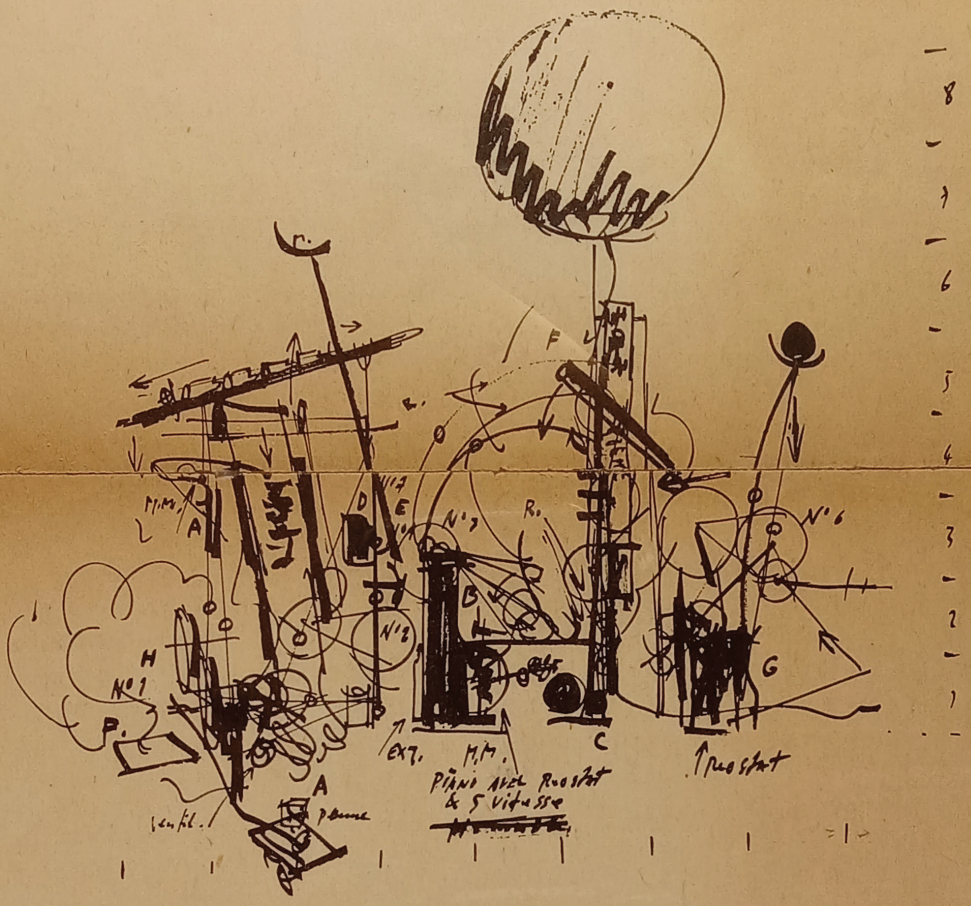
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Like many of his generation, M. Tinguely is detached from all movements, political or artistic. But his avowed detachment doesn't prevent him from participating in public events, or creating them, in what can be considered a persuasive or programatic way. A year ago, for instance, he flew over Duesseldorf, Germany, in a small plane, dropping manifestoes on the streets.

He told the Germans—whom he seems to regard as too precise, too mechanical—that "everything moves continuously; immobility does not exist." He exhorted them to accept instability. "Resist the anxious fear to fix the instantaneous, to kill that which is living. Stop insisting on 'values' which cannot but break down. Be free, live. Stop painting time. Stop evoking movement and

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HOMAGE TO NEW YORK

A self-constructing and self-destroying work of art conceived and built by Jean Tinguely

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SCULPTURE GARDEN
MARCH 17, 1960
6:30-7:00 P.M.

Homage to New York

We know that emotion cannot be petrified, that love cannot be bound, that life cannot be conserved and time cannot be held. Jean Tinguely's experiments are works of art in which time, movement and gesture are demonstrated—not merely evoked. Tinguely accepts the Heraclitan change inherent in life. His is a world in flux and constant self-transformation.

Being very much part of his time, Tinguely uses machines to show movement, but he is fully aware that machines are no more permanent than life itself. Their time runs out, they destroy themselves. This he demonstrates dramatically in *Homage to New York*. Here he brings the motor into an ironic situation which controverts its function.

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rendered helpless, it no longer operates in its normal way. It destroys itself more quickly because it performs more intensely.

In New York Tinguely finds a maximum concentration of human life and energy, a virility which accelerates its own dissolution. He believes that the idea of a self-constructing and self-destroying mechanized sculpture would never have occurred to him in the ancient ambiance of the Mediterranean coast. Its dynamic energy as well as its final self-destruction—are they not artistic equivalents for our own culture?

He has conceived and built this sculpture and is eager to witness its loss so that we may witness its choreography.

PETER SELZ

Tinguely ex machina

Forty years ago Tinguely's grandadas thumbed their noses at Mona Lisa and Cézanne. Recently Tinguely himself has devised machines which shatter the placid shells of Arp's immaculate eggs, machines which at the drop of a coin scribble a moustache on the automatistic Muse of abstract expressionism, and (wipe that smile off your face) an apocalyptic far-out breakthrough which, it is said, clinks and clanks, tingles and tangles, whirrs and buzzes, grinds and creaks, whistles and pops itself into a katabolic Götterdämmerung of junk and scrap. Oh great brotherhood of Jules Verne, Paul Klee, Sandy Calder, Leonardo da Vinci, Rube Goldberg, Marcel Duchamp, Piranesi, Man Ray, Picabia, Filippo Morghen, are you with it?

TINGVELY EX MACHINA
MORITVRI TE SALVTAMVS

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

Tinguely's things are so good that maybe they are not modern art any more. In place of regularity he puts irregularity. His machines are not machines, they are anti-machines. They are mechanic and meta-mechanic. They make anarchy. These things are more free than a human being can ever hope to be. They represent a freedom that without them would not exist. They are pieces of life that have jumped out of the systems: out of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong. To try to conserve the situation that exists will make a man unhappy, because it is hopeless. This kind of art accepts changes, destruction, construction and chance, that rules anyway. These machines are pure rhythm, jazz-machines. But look out, because it is not an innocent game.

K. G. HULTEN

Tinguely's art is:

—An art of spectacle—without the boggling crowd these machines would no more exist than Hegel's orchid in the jungle.

—An art of artlessness and imperfections—more human than machine.

—An art of destructions enacted—not concealed and held captive as they are in "ordinary" painting.

—An art of movement that at its very limits touches fixity—*les extrêmes se touchent.*

DORE ASHTON

There are times in human history when the things men have been accustomed to doing and have long accepted as a part of the established order erupt in their faces. This is the situation right now—the universal crisis is forcing us to redefine our cultural values. We are like the man who is astonished to discover that the suit he has on does not fit him any longer. Religion, ethics, and art have all transcended themselves, especially art, which, instead of being art as we know it, has come to demonstrate man's attitude toward his basic problems. So it is senseless to ask whether or not Tinguely's machines are art. What they show in a very significant way is man's struggle for survival in a scientific world. There are two kinds of art, if we may still use the word: "classicistic" art that relies on tradition and Dada art that relies on shock for its effects. I would call Tinguely a Meta-Dadaist because his machines not only turn traditional concepts upside down but also realize the old Dada love of movement. Tinguely is the inventor of the perpetuum mobile. I think his work is one of the great breakthroughs in modern art. It is a giant step toward *la realité nouvelle*.

RICHARD HUELSENBECK

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si la scie scie la scie
et si la scie qui scie la scie
est la scie que scie la scie
il y a Suisscide métallique.

Marcel Duchamp
1960

[If the saw saws the saw, and if the saw which saws the saw is the saw which saws the saw, there is a metallic suicide.]

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Svenska Dagbladet (conserv.) – May 17

Museum becomes playpen (hed)

"Shock often schoolmistress visitor ... enormous rooms like a blasted amusement park ... they ridicule both machines & sculptures but have nothing to put in their place ... it is difficult to read most of motor and engine noise the 'art for arts sake' of most boastful kind

Hälsingborgs Dagblad

"This art exemplifies pure anarchy at its most beautiful – – – it is, as far as we can say part of pure life that has managed to move beyond good & evil, beyond & sorrow, beauty & ugly. It is part of pure existence eternally changing. But one is sorry it [illegible] is not [illegible]. It is. It is an assault on the est. order.

Dagens Nyheter (17 may) – biggest paper (liberal)

"At the moment the Mod Mus is changed into a violent, noisy & [illegible] provocation. Those who have any idea what art shd be find themselves in a peculiar situation

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70,000 in Stockholm in 3½ months. a record (every 10th inhabitant)

Dagens Nyheter (18 May)

"Everybody laughed ... one has seldom seen such a humorous exhibition, and it is not often that one gets close to art that you have only to kick it to make it start."

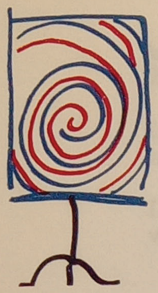
Swedish Riksdag: 'Should a state institution lend itself to such circus activité?'

"What a happy show" (Dagens Nyheter)

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INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF ART IN MOTION
EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE D'ART CINETIQUE
MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE DELL'ARTE DINAMICA
INTERNATIONELL UTSTÄLLNING AV RÖRELSEN I KONSTEN
INTERNATIONALE AUSSTELLUNG VON BEWEGUNGSKUNST

MODERNA MUSEET, STOCKHOLM March 17, 1961

Mr Calvin Tomkins
Newsweek
444 Madison Avenue
NEW YORK 22 N.Y.
USA

Dear Mr Tomkins,

Thank you for your letter and the article. It seems very good to me.

About that evening in 1955 I don't remember much. We met every day, Breer, Ultvedt, Tinguely and myself and talked all the time about art in movement, film, a dynamic society, art and politics etc. I went back to Sweden in the summer and asked Tinguely if he would like to come along. He came later in the summer. We all lived in the room of the review Blandaren (The Mixer). Tinguely began to work and made about twenty "meta-mecanics" which were exposed a month later in the Gallery Samlaren here. (I enclose a photostat of the catalogue of that show.* As you can see it is also a kind of general survey of 19th century kinetic art until then.

* I send it in a separate envelop.

I also enclose the catalogue of the show at Galerie Denise René).

In the summer 1955 I was working with a friend, Hans Nordström, on a film that was called "A day in Town". Tinguely plays a policeman in it. One morning we were shooting in the entrance of a big Pharmacie in the center of Stockholm, Jean was to go through a door. Something went wrong with the camera and we had to stand around for some time. Jean had a Swedish policeman's uniform, but as he was not to be seen beneath the jacket he had blue jeans instead of uniform-pants. Suddenly a lady went up to him and asked for an information about how to go to a certain street. Jean answered in French that he could not understand Swedish. She then asked the same question in French. Jean knew where the street was and how to reach it and described it to her and she went way.

The scene seems to have been obsered by a plainclothes detective who immediately hailed a taxi, arrested Jean and took him away in the taxi. I did not see this but in the moment when they entered the taxi and went away. After an hour we found out what policestation he had been taken to. There they already knew it was true that we were taking a motion picture because the name of the company was marked inside the policeman's

NATIONALMUSEUM, STOCKHOLM

clothes (shoes?).

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hat. The story was on the front pages in the afternoon. I was fined 25 crowns two years later, for taking film without permission.

If you want to see the film Mr Amos Vogel of Cinema 16, New York, has a copy and can show it to you.

I hope these are some of the things you wanted to hear about. Please write me if there is something else you want to know about.

Yours very truly

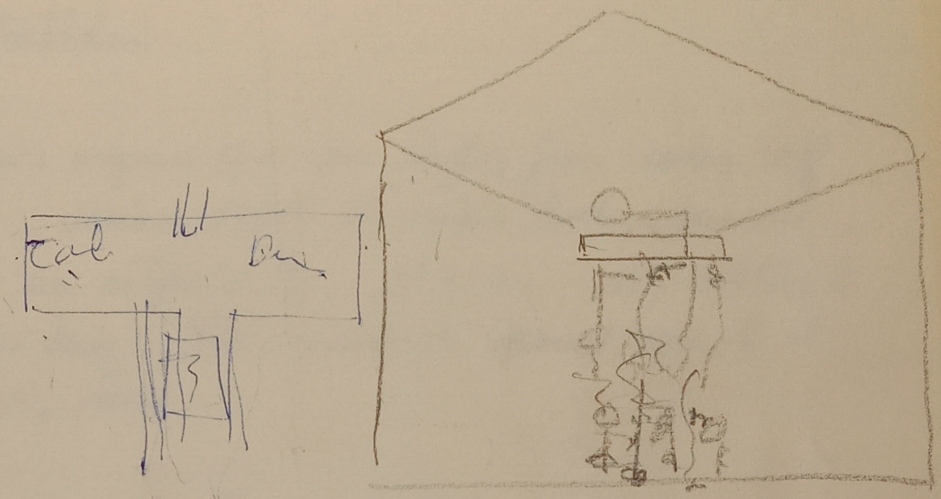
Pontus Hultén

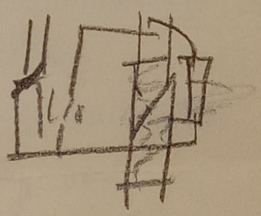
(Pontus Hultén)

clothes (shoes?)."

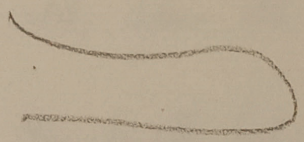
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Strömma



Appeli App

36

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29

clothes (shoes?).

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Billy Kluver – Stockholm

Jean's magnum opus was hanging from ceiling of museum; various objects at various levels, a raincoat, a fur, an artificial leg, pots + pans – all relating to the human being. Each moved for several seconds at intervals, ~~some~~

More than 20 other constructions of Jean's, including large metamatic with gas motor. And in town, in square was dramatic theater, a large pile of animated junk called "Narva" – Charles X first victory over Russ. (had been called "Poltava" until night before, when Jean discovered that was name of a defeat). Painted junk – red, blue etc.

Opening night, the guests had cocktail at museum, then took ferry to island to watch fireworks. The impresario was Tinguely, out in a rowboat (he can't swim), setting off fireworks that were supposed to fail. Rockets with things attached, so would start up + then drop immediately. But it was very beautiful + spectacular anyway and thus a double failure, ~~to~~ a ~~spectacle~~ ~~failure~~ that failed to fail.

Calder on Jean: "I would hate to be in his clothes (shoes?)."

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"Human situation" things - what the Happening people do. Also what distinguishes Tinguely's motion from Jean Tyc's. American contribution started with Lo, then nearly dropped him.

Stankewicz machine a sensation - made more noise even than Jean's. Operated by coin (any coin) for 3 seconds only. Billy says it was anti-movement, very ~~[illegible]~~ "vicious."

Schöffer made a robot that walked around disgustingly.

Agan angry as usual, rearranged things so his stuff monument, had as many pieces as Tinguely. Hulten now weeding them out. "Again and again and again," said Rauschenberg.

Tinguely is the only European who is doing what the NY group is doing. NY much further out. T. alone in Europe - may come here but Billy doubts it. Feels the monster of stability has already overtaken him.

Eva shows in all his work. She is the violence and the anarchism, to which Jean has added humor and play.

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